



# St. Lucie County Legislative Update

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## Our Mission....

*To provide service, infrastructure and leadership necessary to advance a safe and sustainable community, maintain a high quality of life, and protect the natural environment for all our citizens.*

## HIGH SPEED RAIL LEGISLATION DISCUSSED

The House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee discussed high speed rail safety on Wednesday, February 22.

Officials from Brightline, CSX and FEC were joined by officials from Indian River and Martin County as well as George Gavalla, for a panel discussion on House Bill 269 sponsored by Representative MaryLynn Magar.

You can view the discussion, by clicking the image below:



## BRANDES FILES LEGISLATION TO KEEP EFI

Legislation filed by Sen. Jeff Brandes, R-St. Petersburg, would keep Enterprise Florida alive.

The two bills, SB 1110 and SB 1112, would allow Florida's economic development program, Enterprise Florida, but under a significantly limited scope.

Instead of focusing on major corporations, Brandes' bills would hone in on small businesses and instead work on fostering a startup environment in the Sunshine State.

Brandes seems to disagree on putting the focus on large companies and corporations, instead saying Florida should concentrate its efforts on smaller businesses which may need the state's help to get off the ground.

Brandes' plan would require \$117 million held in the Quick Action Holding Fund to be returned to the State Economic Enhancement and Development Fund as well as sanctioning businesses relocating from the state within three years of receiving final incentive payments.

New incentive contracts would be limited to 10 years and any capital investments made with incentive money must stay in Florida. Brandes' proposal would also change up the EFI board, including members of the "rural economic development interests" along with CareerSource Florida. On top of those provisions, the Florida Senate would be required to confirm the president of EFI.

## Click the links below



**Watch Session Live:****Connect with  
St. Lucie County!****Mark Satterlee**

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## HOUSE COMMITTEE VOTES TO AXE EFI BUT KEEPS VISIT FLORIDA

The House Appropriations Committee voted 18-12 for a bill that would get rid of Enterprise Florida and cut Visit Florida's budget to a third of what it was appropriated for the current year.

HB 7005 passed its only committee hurdle Tuesday after an amendment was adopted that would keep Visit Florida with a \$25 million budget and impose restrictions on bonuses and travel. The new language would require Visit Florida to agree to a series of restrictions as conditions for getting a \$25 million a year from the Legislature.

The quasi-government agency would have to post every contract on a state website; require the governor to approve all out-of-state and foreign travel; require that every contract worth \$750,000 or more be given to the Legislature for consultation; require it to submit its operating budget to the Legislature every year; and require Senate confirmation of Visit Florida's CEO.

In a release, Corcoran said that Visit Florida's budget has increased by 169 percent since 2009, from \$29 million to \$78 million, and that the average state tourism marketing budget is \$20 million.

As part of the amendment, "Compensation of Visit Florida employees will be limited, benefits frozen at current levels and bonuses prohibited."

Employees and board members will be prohibited from receiving food, beverages, lodging, entertainment or gifts from the agency or from any local tourism or economic development agency.

The bill has no more committee stops and could head to the House floor during session. Currently, there is no Senate companion bill.

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## CORCORAN CONCEDES ON JOINT RULE

House Speaker Richard Corcoran said Wednesday that he is open to compromise with the state Senate on his hardline new rules aimed at increasing transparency and accountability in the budget process.

Senate President Joe Negron has resisted Corcoran's rules, last week even threatening to sue the House over what he considers an unconstitutional attempt to control the Senate, an independent coequal branch of government.

Negron defused the potential legal battle when he said the Senate would not sue but instead would work out their differences over the House rules in closed-door negotiations in an attempt to come up with a joint rule.

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## STADIUM FUNDING BILL PASSES HOUSE COMMITTEE

HB 77, which would prevent sports teams from building or renovating stadiums on public land, passed the House Government Accountability Committee 14-5 on Feb. 21.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Bryan Avila, R-Hialeah, said the bill "protects taxpayer funds from being used to subsidize already successful businesses."

An amendment was added to the bill which would also require a stipulation in future contracts between sports franchises and state and local governments that compels franchises to pay any outstanding debt the state acquired for construction on sports facilities if the franchise permanently leaves the facility.

Rep. Joseph Abruzzo, who voted against the bill, questioned whether the bill would impede the overall economic boost sports teams create. He also said he did not want to tie the hands of local governments and signal that Florida is "not open for business" to sports teams.

An identical bill (SB 122) by Sen. Greg Steube, R-Sarasota, has yet to be heard in committee.

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